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ABSTRACT

Use of electronic communication options to access foreign language teaching resources is discussed, illustrated with examples from programs and applications found in New York State. The discussion is divided into four sections, each addressing an aspect of electronic communication for preparing for and teaching a foreign language: issues of access to computer resources, including appropriate equipment, connectivity, training in the use of electronic resources, time, and limitations presented by the need for non-Roman character sets and diacritical marks; Internet resources, including lists, service lists, and language-specific lists; use of gophers and resources on the World Wide Web; examples of potential uses of Internet resources; and proposals and plans projected for the future. (Contains 17 print and electronic resources.) (MSE)

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Addressing the Need for Electronic Communication in Foreign Language Teaching

Jean W. LeLoup & Robert Ponterio
ICC Department
SUNY Cortland

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Addressing the Need for Electronic Communication in Foreign Language Teaching

Introduction

Language is one tool that enables man to function in his own society and also provides the means to relate to other cultures. This basic fact has spurred people to study and learn foreign languages for centuries. Now more than ever, the need to learn another language is crucial to functioning successfully in an increasingly global environment. Foreign language (FL) instruction must keep pace with the growing and novel demands made by learners who are no longer content merely to be exposed to the language through grammar practice and literature study. Indeed, learners now insist on language instruction that will "translate" into language usage in practical, real-life situations. While literature still plays a central role as a representation of the cultures studied in a FL classroom, the focus has shifted towards oral and written *communication*.

Because foreign language teachers are in the business of teaching their students how to communicate, it would seem a natural segue to engage students in direct contact and communication with target language (TL) speakers, texts, materials, and culture as frequently as possible. Students need to be immersed directly in the TL world by any means possible--use of authentic materials, exposure to TL culture, and even direct communication with native TL speakers. Students need to realize that the TL is a viable means of daily communication for millions of people and not just a subject to be studied in school, far removed from any semblance of reality. This admirable aspiration notwithstanding, "foreign" usually means far away in geographic distance, and it is clearly not practical to transport an entire class physically to another country on a routine basis for total immersion

in the TL atmosphere. Nevertheless, the FL teacher can "virtually" bring TL people and their culture into the classroom regularly by means of electronic communication and resources.

The telecommunications infrastructure has been developed to such an extent in the past twenty years that contacts that once were quite difficult if not impossible have now become commonplace. Telephone calls have become much easier and much less expensive, foreign television images are accessible via satellite, foreign films can be bought or rented on videocassette, fax machines link professionals from around the world, and through the Internet one can routinely exchange electronic mail (e-mail), texts, sounds, images, and even video. These are no longer the tools of the future; they are the tools of today. Students need to develop competencies for participation in an information society, for the job skills of a global economy, for lifelong learning, and for personal pleasure. Exposure to, familiarity with, and regular use of FL information on the Internet is paramount to students' and teachers' professional development.

Two steps are necessary to take advantage of the worthwhile options offered on the Internet . First, teachers must have direct and easy access to electronic communication possibilities. Second, FL teachers must revise their instructional practices in order to use these resources. By including the virtual reality of the TL in their classroom, FL educators can provide students with maximum exposure to the TL in a practical, functional sense. The first step in the process--gaining access--is no small feat, but it is a necessary one for those who would teach successfully for the twenty-first century. The second step targets practicalities: once a teacher has access to all of these possibilities on the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), or through gopher, what can be done? This article will address these two steps: access to and implementation of electronic resources for FL teachers. Various methods of connectivity will be examined in order to provide the reader with sufficient

information to explore means of obtaining electronic access. Electronic communications resources will then be discussed, with an emphasis on suggested uses and direct application to the FL classroom.

Access

Connection to the Internet through school accounts is essential for class projects, and for many teachers in New York State such an account can also be accessed from home through a dial-up connection. Two examples of the players cooperating to provide electronic communications services for educators in Central New York are NYSERNet and BOCES. NYSERNet (The New York State Education and Research Network) is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization. It is one among many companies furnishing Internet connections to schools and other organization. As of August 1994, NYSERNet provided network access to over 600 affiliates in New York State, from major universities to small elementary schools. One of NYSERNet's goals is to allow local dial-up access in every location in the state. The Board Of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) works with NYSERNet to provide network access and support services to school districts. The services offered by BOCES can be quite extensive, often including network connection, equipment, support, and training. Through the efforts of such organizations, many teachers now have an Internet connection, but for a variety of reasons, many others still do not.

Finding time to work on an Internet project during the school day can be difficult, and it is not always possible to dial into one's school account from home. In addition to or instead of connecting to the network through school, many teachers have turned to other sources. Freenets or communitynets have added Internet connectivity to the list of community-based services that they provide. These not-for-profit groups rely on contributions of time and money from participants for their survival and growth.

Commercial providers such as AOL, Compuserve, Delphi, Prodigy and many others have long offered e-mail service and are now moving into other areas of the Internet. Other, generally lesser known, companies exist that specialize in full Internet connections either through local dial-up or 800 numbers (Sutherland). These services are easier to locate in larger communities than in small towns where some digging is definitely required to find the best deal. When buying service through a commercial firm, careful comparison shopping and a good understanding of how the rates work and how to "surf the net" efficiently can mean big savings (cf. LeLoup & Ponterio, 1995).

At the OCM BOCES site in Syracuse, NY, teachers can visit a "smart classroom" that showcases the potential of this technology. This ideal, however, is currently beyond the reach of all but a small number of teachers. Although the cost of the equipment needed to integrate this technology in the classroom has fallen dramatically and continues to do so, the commitment to adequate support for improving education as well as the specific priorities of individual school districts vary widely throughout the state. It is not suggested that every classroom needs to be outfitted with the entire panoply of state of the art electronics, but even the essentials are lacking in many school districts around the state. For example, two high schools in central New York State exemplify this rift between the information haves and have-nots. High School A has made a significant effort to develop communications via local and wide area networks, Internet connections through BOCES, equipment acquisition, and faculty support and training. Students can have accounts and from computers in their labs they can exchange e-mail with other students from around the world. At High School B things are different. International connectivity is still in the planning stages because budgetary limitations have precluded the investment in the necessary wiring. Equipment is being purchased but not to the same degree. Teachers in the two districts want to allow their

students to engage in the same sorts of activities, but in High School B only one computer in the school can access the network via a dial-up connection. Since students here cannot learn to use the network in school, only students whose families have the resources to provide electronic links at home have the opportunity to develop these skills. Thus the lack of access in schools widens the gulf between the privileged and the economically disadvantaged in society. In this example, a large economic difference does not exist between the two school districts. The inequality was caused primarily by a difference in priorities. How much greater the difference would be between a rich and poor school district!

In addition to equipment purchases and network access, teachers must receive additional training if they are to use these technologies and teach their students to use them. Basic training is provided by BOCES in many school districts in New York State, but foreign language teachers also have special needs because the sites to which they wish to connect tend to be more widely distributed (being located in foreign countries) than those of other disciplines.

Another serious limitation of current electronic communication technology for FL teaching applications is the difficulty of using diacritical marks and non-roman character sets. Even in languages whose writing system resembles the one used by the English language, the lack of required symbols is an anti-pedagogical distraction to say the least. Reading and writing incorrect forms is uncomfortable for those who use a language with ease, and it is worse still for students who have a difficult time initially learning correct forms. The technology needs to be a facilitator, not an impediment to natural communication in the TL. Thus the typing and appearance of text in the TL must be as close as possible to that used in everyday writing in the target culture.

A 7-bit data path has been the norm for electronic communication in English using the ASCII character set. This system, originally designed for teletype terminals, allows 127 characters: 52 letters, 10 numbers, 32 control codes, and 33 other symbols including punctuation, but does not provide any accents. An 8-bit data path, essentially doubling the character set to 255, has become common and can be found in the most popular personal computer systems. These extended character sets have not been standardized, but they do provide most of the characters needed for typing in French, German, and Spanish. Although personal computers have been using these 8-bit character sets since the mid 1980s, most e-mail systems still do not automatically manage them in 1995. A small number of services such as the French language news distribution service, Frognet (Frognet@list.cren.net), allow subscribers to request versions with or without accents depending on the subscribers' ability to receive them. Progress is slow but has been improving as more FL teachers and non-anglophone businesses and government agencies are using é-mail and the system has been expanding internationally.

Even without an adequate data path, solutions are possible. A 7-bit coded format for 8-bit character sets, Quoted-Printable, is part of a standard called MIME. FL teachers with MIME compatible software can send and receive 8-bit characters even if their e-mail system does not have an 8-bit path. Similar encoding schemes are available for texts using the non-Roman character sets needed for Russian, Greek, Japanese, Hebrew or Arabic. For these languages, the software must be able to display the necessary symbols, and both the sending and receiving computers must agree on the codes used. Better standardization of these codes is essential. A16-bit Unicode standard allows the representation of all the world's written languages in its 65,536 symbols. Though not yet widely available, it is being included as a feature of new operating systems by companies like Microsoft that do business

internationally (Unicode). Solutions to these problems will make the lives of FL teachers much easier and, although these solutions are coming, they will come faster if FL teachers demand them.

Internet Resources

Lists:

Perhaps the most basic electronic communications resource is that of foreign language "lists" accessed through e-mail. A list is a discussion group on a topic of common interest to the subscribers. Electronic mail discussion lists are a very powerful tool for professional development for language teachers trying to communicate with colleagues from around the world and attempting to use technology to bring the sounds and images of the target culture into the classroom. The obvious rationale is to improve the contextualization of discourse by making the students' TL learning experience more realistic.

One prime example is FLTEACH, the Foreign Language Teaching Forum. This Listserv list was founded on February 1st of 1994 and runs on a computer at SUNY/Buffalo. It was formed as a result of much concern and dialogue about issues important to the FL profession such as articulation leading to sequential and complimentary FL curriculum across educational levels, improvement in FL instruction and student learning, and increased communication between and among FL educators (Jackson; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1995; SUNY 2000). The impetus for the list came from a need to unite as a profession and collaborate on any and all issues that would enhance the instructional goals of the FL profession. FLTEACH has subscribers from all educational levels (elementary, secondary, and tertiary) as well as others with an interest in language instruction and learning (for example, school administrators, government employees, commercial interests). It also has a world-wide representation with (at this writing) nearly a thousand members from over

twenty-two countries. Instructions for subscribing to FLTEACH as well as how to contact the co-managers can be found in the Appendix.

Among the many goals of FLTEACH is an increase in sharing information, ideas, and materials between and among FL educators (cf. LeLoup & Ponterio, 1995). This professional collaboration is accomplished through exchanges on the list, material archived by FLTEACH, and pointers to other FL resources on the Internet that subscribers have discovered or originated, used, and found helpful in classroom instruction. Members of FLTEACH benefit from the expertise, knowledge, and "networking" connections of all the other subscribers who choose to participate in a myriad of ways. FLTEACH has a WWW home page (http://www.cortland.edu/www_root/flteach/flteach.html) and its own gopher (gopher.cortland.edu 71), both of which point to numerous FL resources that, in turn, can have even more links to further resources. These two resources are discussed below. [1]

FLTEACH also archives a "Review of BITNET/INTERNET Lists for Language Learning" (Bedell) from which one may choose language or even topic specific discussion groups from among over 800 offerings. A few of these lists are discussed briefly below to give an idea of their scope and function. These examples represent a minute sampling of the possibilities for FL educators looking for a special group or resource for their particular language.

Service lists:

LLTI: The LLTI (Language Learning and Technology International) list distributes information about all aspects of the technology used in language teaching. Subscribers post information or questions about language labs, video, computer applications, and any technological questions related to language teaching. LLTI is also a forum where subscribers can discuss the value of products or new trends in the profession. The many experts who

subscribe in order to exchange information are also very helpful to those looking for sources of information about setting up a language lab, purchasing software for computer-assisted instruction, or finding information about satellite access to foreign television broadcasts. Because the answers to all these question are archived, the LLTI list is also a databank of information about language learning technology.

To subscribe to LLTI send an e-mail to: LISTSERV@DARTCMS1.DARTMOUTH.EDU with the message: SUB LLTI firstname lastname.

LLTI is run by Otmar Foelsche, Director, Humanities Resources, Dartmouth College.

IECC: The Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections (K-12) list provides a service for those FL teachers seeking partner classrooms for international and cross-cultural electronic mail exchanges. It is not a list for discussion or for people seeking individual penpals. To request a partner classroom, the FL teacher sends a message that includes descriptive information and preferences such as who and where the teacher is, how many students are in the class and the number of student contacts desired, preferred language and geographic location (i.e., country or region within a country), any other special interests, and desired beginning date for the exchange (IECC, 1995). There are also related IECC mailing lists such as those for teachers seeking classroom partnerships in Higher Education (IECC-HE), one for any kind of e-mail project announcements (IECC-PROJECTS), and one for discussing strategies for using e-mail in an educational setting (IECC-DISCUSSION). The latter list is quite helpful for those wishing to embark on penpal projects or incorporate this electronic resource into the curriculum. It offers suggestions for optimal success and also discusses typical pitfalls, all from the reference point of seasoned users. Archives of all postings to the IECC mailing lists are available via Gopher (gopher.stolaf.edu), the WWW

(http://www.stolaf.edu/network/iecc/), and anonymous FTP ftp.stolaf.edu:pub/iecc/archive.he).

To subscribe to IECC send an e-mail to:

IECC-REQUEST@STOLAF.EDU

with the message: SUBSCRIBE

IECC is run by Craig D. Rice, Academic Computing Center, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN with assistance from Professors Bruce Roberts and Howard Thorsheim of the Psychology Department.

Language-specific lists:

Literally hundreds of on-line discussion groups address foreign language interests, and they are as specific and diverse as their membership permits and supports. While many of these lists appear to remain relatively stable over time, others may wane or undergo some sort of metamorphosis such as a change in name, address, or primary focus. For this reason and because of the large number of lists, only a small sampling will be mentioned here to provide the reader with an idea of what is available.[2]

The **Classe Globale de Français** <CGF-activites@list.cren.net> has as its goal to support activities involving communication among students of French through participation in inter-class projects. Teachers subscribe their classes and then the students take part in organized projects in the TL. CGF collaborates with Eurosesame (gopher://gopher.citi2.fr:70/11/eurosesame), an umbrella organization that links similar groups from around the world. The address for subscriptions is: listproc@list.cren.net and the moderator is Yona Webb.

EDUFRANCAIS (edufrancais@univ-rennes1.fr) is an international list where French teachers at all levels and in all countries can exchange cultural and linguistic information

about France and other francophone countries. One of the current moderators of EDUFRANCAIS is Josephine Remon, Attachée linguistique, Ambassade de France, Ottawa.

ESPAN-L is a "lista para profesores de español" and its address is (ESPAN-L@TAUNIVM.BITNET). Discussion includes a wide range of topics from cultural notes to grammatical points. Native and non-native speakers ask and receive language-related information on this list.

RIBO-L is a list for German and English discussion (RIBO-L@URIACC). Postings are in both languages and the topic range is general in nature.

GERMNEWS is another list for FL educators teaching German. It is a resource for German language texts and information (GERMNEWS@DEARN).

TESL-L is a list for teachers of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (TESL-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU). This list has quite a large subscribership and has implemented subdivision lists for more particular interests (i.e., TESLCA-L for Computer Assisted Language Learning; TESLJB-L for Jobs and Employment issues; TESLIT-L for Literacy and Adult Education; and so forth). TESL-L also maintains extensive archives of materials for use by its membership. Anthea Tillyer manages TESL-L with assistance from several other ESL educators.

Gopher & World Wide Web

In addition to the variety of e-mail discussion groups that allow FL teachers to communicate with each other, many gopher and World Wide Web sites provide easy access to information archives via links to resources located around the world. Whereas e-mail lists send out information to a defined population at a specific time, gopher and WWW resources are available to anyone whenever they are needed. These client/server applications depend on computer programs at each end of the link that manage the connection to be sure that data

is properly transferred in usable form, irrespective of computer type. The focus on ease of use in these new services is very important for teachers who prefer to invest time in their teaching and subject matter specialty rather than in learning to use computer programs that are not intuitive or in organizing their own collection of on-line materials and resources. As with e-lists, so many gopher and WWW resources are available that could be of interest to FL teachers that this discussion will be limited to a very few examples.

E-mail involves the exchange of texts but gopher allows one to obtain texts, images, sounds, computer programs, and links to other sites. It can also provide an entry point into a computer system, for example a library catalog in a foreign country. Where gopher can usually display one type of file at a time, the World Wide Web format, HyperText Markup Language (HTML), can provide these same gopher services but can also display multimedia presentations, placing different kinds of data in the same document or page. The transfer of this large amount of information necessitates either a faster connection or a longer wait for the information to arrive. A 14400 baud modem is minimally acceptable for a WWW client.

The best places to begin looking for useful resources for FL teaching in either gopher or WWW applications are the collections of resources that other teachers with more Internet experience have made available to their colleagues. This can save an enormous amount of time. The FLTEACH gopher (gopher.cortland.edu 71) includes a menu of "Foreign Language Electronic Resources," a collection of gopher sites that FL teachers have found useful. Also included here are a number of gopher locations at major universities that attempt to keep track of all language-related gopher sites. Many of the foreign news services that are distributed by e-mail are also available via gopher. These can have their own host sites or be included in a language specific site.

Gophers: "The American Association of Teachers of French" (AATF) gopher (utsainfo.utsa.edu 7070) is an example of a site that provides French news, information about the association, sample pedagogical activities, links to audiovisual-based resources in France and to the French embassies in the US and Canada. Other language gophers include "Languages Other than English" (LOTE) on the New York State Education Department gopher (unix5.nysed.gov) or the "Less Commonly Taught Languages" (LCTL) gopher (lctl.acad.umn.edu). For authentic resources, electronic sites can be found in the countries where the TL is spoken. While most gopher-based resources are non-profit, the "Agora Language Marketplace" (http://www.agoralang.com:2410/ or gopher.agoralang.com 2411) gives companies or individual teachers who wish to market products of use to FL teachers a place where this can be done.

World Wide Web: WWW resources have not been around as long as gopher resources, but their numbers have been growing rapidly because they are so easy to use and because the population that has access to them is so much larger than it was several years ago when gopher was created. The FLTEACH WWW page (http://www.cortland.edu/www/flteach/) does not attempt to collect a large number of language specific WWW pages, though it does include a few of the authors' personal favorites. Its primary goal is to provide links to the collections that other language teachers and language lab directors around the world have compiled. These collections include, among many others, the "WWW Resources for the Humanities" page at Berkeley, the "VCU Trail Guide to International Sites and Language Resources" by Robert Godwin-Jones at Virginia Commonwealth University collected at the College level, as well as Sean S. Davis' "Language Links", a gateway to a great collection of resources for languages taught at Bethel High School, Hampton, VA.

Some FL educators have amassed an impressive collection of sites specific to a particular language on their own WWW pages. For instance, many German and Russian

links can be found on pages produced at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro by Andreas Lixl-Purcell. German sources are located on "German Studies Trails on the Internet" (http://www2.uncg.edu/~lixlpurc/german.html), and Russian sites are indicated under "Russian Area Studies Trails on the Internet" (http://www2.uncg.edu/~lixlpurc/russian.html). Francophiles will find many locations of interest gathered by Robert Peckham of the University of Tennessee at Martin and displayed at "Tennessee Bob's Famous French Links!" (http://www.utm.edu/departments/french/french.html). At these sites the FL teacher can indulge in "virtual one-stop shopping."

The variety of Web sites is indeed extensive. Notable are specific support sites for language teaching such as "The Listening Comprehension Exercise Network" (LCEN), which distributes exercises based SCOLA and Univision news broadcasts in French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish (http://gwis.circ.gwu.edu/~slavic/lcen.html), as well as a myriad of authentic sites in the target culture where multimedia presentations of all sorts can be integrated into classroom activities.

Connections to on-line versions of current magazines such as "Der Speigel" (http://news.NordWest.POP.DE:80/nda/spiegel/) to current anthropological expeditions like the "Mayaquest" expedition in Mexico (http://mayaquest.mecc.com/) to sites of national and cultural importance such as Le Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie (http://dmf.culture.fr/culture/) or even the presentation of images in travel guides designed to boost tourism, e.g. Internet Way's "Le Tourisme Virtuel en France" (http://www.iway.fr/internet-way/fr/html/France/tourisme.html) can all give students insights into the target culture through authentic materials immediately accessed from around the world. Even though gopher and WWW based materials do not involve the kind of interactive

communication that comes from two -way connection of e-mail, they contribute significantly to the immediacy and authenticity of materials that can be brought into the classroom.

Sample Uses of Internet Resources

FL teachers need to see the direct usefulness of these resources in their classroom in order to be persuaded to make the time investment necessary to learn to navigate the Internet, find materials, and employ them in the curriculum. It does take time initially to familiarize oneself with the workings of the Internet and, as discussed above, a direct access is paramount in facility of use. Given the communicative goal of FL teaching, however, teachers cannot ignore the valuable electronic resources that are now so readily available. The suggestions below will hopefully provide the impetus for further investigation on the part of the reader.

Perhaps the most simplified use of the Internet is direct communications with other FL colleagues through e-mail and membership on language lists. The information and dialogue encountered through participation in these forums can provide FL educators with a wealth of materials, knowledge, and expertise that can be directly applied to their classroom. The range of topics (as illustrated on FLTEACH) is wide, from information about student trips and recommended sponsors to esoteric theoretical discussions such as when and how to begin FL instruction to young children or the theoretical underpinnings of Krashen's "pleasure hypothesis." Requests for opinions about FL software, textbooks, summer immersion programs, and language camps are posted and answered regularly. Articulation between and among levels of FL teaching, as well as proper placement of students in language courses at the college level, have been extensively discussed. Foreign language teaching methodologies and their application to the classroom have also elicited numerous comments--ranging from Counseling Learning to contextualization to communicative

techniques to the *whys* and *ways* of teaching grammar. Concerns about shifting FL enrollments from one language to another have been addressed and suggestions offered to combat this situation. Also, for the "singleton" FL teacher in a school, the sense of isolation can be great, and electronic communication is a valuable support system for these colleagues.

Some sample list postings (in this case, from FLTEACH) will serve to illustrate the benefits of participation on language lists in terms of daily classroom instruction. One member was interested in using plays in her foreign language classroom and requested some advice and suggestions on incorporating this instructional technique. She received many enthusiastic replies detailing how others had used plays successfully in their classrooms in the past. Another subscriber was in need of assistance in the presentation of a difficult grammar point: the preterite versus the imperfect. The responses to him filled fifteen pages and supplied many FL teachers with several weeks' worth of new ideas for an old lesson. In short, subscribing to a language list can be a unique way to improve one's instruction and to participate in continual professional development on-line (cf. LeLoup & Ponterio, 1995).

The mechanics of FL teaching are another area served by the resources of the Internet. Selection and implementation of textbooks is a vital part of the teaching process, and FL educators can request and receive valuable input regarding adoption of texts for classroom use. Recommendations and advice on textbook series are regularly solicited, and comments are readily forthcoming from those who have expertise and experience in this area. In addition, textbook authors and editors are also subscribers to FL lists, and hopefully the input shared among FL professionals will have an influence on the products that will be available in the future. At the very least, it is a method of providing feedback to the powers behind this very important aspect of language teaching and sending signals in terms of what FL teachers deem important for instructional materials.

As the role of language instruction in an overall school curriculum changes, alternative scheduling methods are being explored, and many have far-reaching ramifications for language teaching. Block scheduling is currently a hot topic among FL teachers, and many who are facing this change are concerned about its effects on language instruction. List discussions address just such timely issues and can provide direction and insight to those who are or will be involved in this curricular shift.

Projects using Internet resources can be exciting for teachers and students alike. The ubiquitous penpal scenario takes on new meaning as communication becomes nearly interactive due to the speed at which letters are transferred. Many FL educators have already incorporated this aspect of the Internet into their instruction and have generously related their experiences, expertise, and suggestions (Hofmann & Hubatsch, Knight). By following these blueprints, employing service lists (such as iecc@stolaf.edu) and making personal modifications, teachers can devise creative cultural interchanges that make the language become even more meaningful and alive to their students. Ambitious students can even create their own home page on the WWW, complete with photographs of themselves and detailed information about their school and community. First year French students at the University of California at Berkeley have created a WWW page that includes photos of and information about the Berkeley campus, all using the TL (http://www.itp.berkeley.edu/french/main.html).

Many WWW home pages exist that have links to foreign language resources all over the world. These WWW pages are usually produced and maintained by educators who have culled useful FL sources for instruction from the Internet. Teachers can devise numerous activities for students using the collection of WWW sites, limited only by one's imagination. Students can be given an assignment such as finding a TL document, downloading the text,

and summarizing it for class presentation. In a variety of language classes and levels (French I, German Culture 315, Spanish 202), for example, such materials could range from an historical document to a movie review. Students could even be given leeway to incorporate their own interests into the Internet search, providing an additional motivational factor. Several suggestions for assignments using the WWW have been contributed to FLTEACH. One example of such an exercise requires students to access a WWW archive dealing with contemporary German Studies issues, (including postmodern literature, culture, film, art, architecture, politics, the media and so forth), download and print a document of the student's choice dealing with a contemporary topic, bring a copy of this document to class, and be ready to discuss its content in German. Parameters are given for length of the presentation (three minutes) and specific materials and information to be included (Lixl-Purcell).

Foreign language teachers can access current information and news from TL countries and develop activities for their own classroom. Exposing students to authentic TL materials and texts is definitely a positive step in preparing them to deal with natural communication and real-life TL usage. Clearly, the task assigned in conjunction with the TL materials must fit the level of the learner, and authentic texts can frequently be tackled by students at many different stages of proficiency simply by changing the focus of the activity. When students realize they can successfully deal with and understand authentic texts, confidence in their own TL abilities soars and they are more apt to attempt further investigation of TL materials. One example of such authentic text usage is that demonstrated by a middle school teacher in Massachusetts. The classroom activity is centered on the French daily news, which the teacher receives on the Internet. The teacher finds a suitable excerpt and then prepares a series of questions about it for students to answer in small groups. Even though the students may not be able to understand the text in its entirety, they can get enough of the gist to

answer the questions. Other class activities can then be designed around the reading, and *voilà,* the classroom is linked to the outside world and a TL country. The teacher has shared several of these exercises with FL colleagues by posting them on cgf-activites@list.cren.net where they are distributed to French teachers across the United States and Canada (Clifford).

Several cultural links have been placed on the WWW, and students can actually *go* and *visit* places they have only read about and studied. One example is that of prehistoric cave paintings, recently discovered and publicized in France in December of 1994 (http://www.culture.fr/gvpda.htm). By utilizing a web browser such as Netscape (available to educators as shareware from any number of public sites on the Internet), students can actually see this archeological discovery as if they were on site. The accompanying description and commentary is, *bien sûr, en français.*

Integration of other school subjects with language learning can be facilitated by taking advantage of the resources on the Internet. Teachers can combine the study of the TL with current events, history, politics, and geography, for example. A case in point is the recurrence of border squirmishes between Ecuador and Peru. By accessing different WWW sites, learners of Spanish can come to understand the historical and political reasons behind the conflict between these two countries. Students will also get an appreciation of the differing perspectives that are prevalent in the two countries by viewing the conflict through Ecuadorian (http://mail.usfq.edu.ec/root.html) *and* Peruvian (http://www.rcp.net.pe/peru/peru.html) "eyes." The maps of Ecuador show a distinct border difference, depending on the WWW site accessed.

Another important use of electronic communications technologies of specific interest to FL teachers lies in the organization of foreign exchange programs. Electronic mail, in

addition to fax and the telephone, has made it much more practical to exchange up to the minute information with colleagues abroad and to reassure parents because the ability to communicate quickly and easily makes it seem that the foreign site is not quite so far away. As better communication improves the organization of such programs, more and more students are able to take advantage of these opportunities for foreign travel, improving the motivation factor in language classes and perhaps even saving some language programs.

Future Projects

Besides the activities already described, better access to communication technology is bringing other as yet untried projects within the grasp of the FL classroom teacher. Following are a few modest proposals for making FL communication more real for language students.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and other chat systems allow a number of users from around the world to communicate with each other in real time. Each of the people connected to a chat area sees what any of the other participants has typed and can respond accordingly. The immediacy of these interactions creates an atmosphere of intimacy that is in some ways similar to small group class work. The messages typed can be saved and later used in developing reports or other written assignments for the group. This activity has the potential for allowing students from different schools to work together on projects or to communicate in a group that includes native speakers of the TL. In addition, IRC encourages participation in spontaneous authentic contextual written communication in the TL. Although some students are intimidated by the computer, others report feeling freer to participate and in fact get more involved and ask more questions through the machine than in person (Kent). As with most teaching tools, the success of "chat" sessions will certainly vary among students. Some teachers have reported seeing students find chat sessions in the TL and participate on

their own, conversing with other students from all over the world (Kimoto). Other FL teachers have been actively engaged in using chat sessions in the classroom in the #espanol and #latinos channels on Undernet where there is also a channel #francais (Lubiner).

MOOs are similar to chat sessions in that they are configured as areas with rooms in which participants can communicate with each other (Bennahum). A MOO also has a theme and a "virtual reality" that the "visitors" create through their participation in role playing, as in a game. One can telnet to the MOO français, where all communication takes place in French (logos.daedalus.com 8888). Foreign language MOOs such as this one have been around for a short time so it is still too early to judge their success.

Another innovation in electronic communication technology is on-line two-way video conferencing. The advent of software to permit video conferencing over the Internet will eventually bring it within the reach of language students. Video links between classrooms for distance learning have been possible for some time, but real two-way links are not common and are generally too expensive for the tight budgets within which most educators must work. With software such as Cornell's CU-SeeMe, it will some day be feasible to allow students from across the world to interview each other using the TL in an authentic face-to-face conversation. Although most network connections now in place are inadequate to this task, the future in which this will be a reality is not so far away.

Conclusion

Electronic communication on the Internet is rapidly becoming a *given* in daily life, much like the telephone and television--equally innovative and radical at their inception. The relation of this technology to FL instruction is a natural and facilitative one. Successful language teaching and learning of the future will occur in classrooms where instruction is enhanced by electronic connections to TL culture, language, and life. Teachers must revise

their thinking about and planning of language lessons to accommodate and incorporate the new capabilities that are at their disposal daily on the Internet. At the same time, students need to acquire the skills needed to function in a society where electronic communication will be a driving force. Clearly, a considerable investment and commitment of time, energy, and training are required on the part of school districts and teachers who would benefit from technology. The increased complexity of dealing with electronic communication in languages other than English means that FL teachers need particular training and technical support compared to their colleagues who function in English. Some of this additional support is now being provided by the community of educators who exchange information on-line through bulletin boards, electronic e-mail discussion lists, gophers, and the World Wide Web. These exchanges can supplement but cannot replace the training required to use and teach the new technologies. The issues of access to and implementation of electronic communication in the FL curriculum loom large in professional discussion and development. Hopefully, this article has clarified some concerns and provided an impetus for further investigation of Internet resources for the FL teacher. The outcome can be greatly improved learning and performance of language students--results certainly worth the effort.

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APPENDIX

TO SUBSCRIBE TO FLTEACH, FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS:

Send an e-mail message to:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.ACSU.BUFFALO.EDU

Put nothing in the subject line.

The message itself should contain only the following single line beginning at the left margin:

SUB FLTEACH firstname lastname

(Example: SUB FLTEACH JANE DOE)

Then send the message. Be sure not to include a signature.

Co-managers of FLTEACH are:

Jean W. LeLoup/Robert Ponterio
Dept. of International Communications and Culture
SUNY Cortland
P.O. Box 2000
Cortland, NY 13045

They may also be reached by e-mail as follows:

LELOUPJ@CORTLAND.EDU
PONTERIOR@CORTLAND.EDU

Address any questions to the co-managers at the addresses above or to:

FLTEACH@CORTLAND.EDU

[1]All Universal Resource Locators (URLs) and Gopher addresses are current as of publication. A URL identified by the prefix *http://* must be accessed through a WWW browser such as Netscape or Mosaic for text and graphics or through LYNX for text only. Gopher sites are most easily accessible through a gopher client, although they can be reached through e-mail (cf. ROADMAP Workshop, Crispin, 1995).

[2]All list addresses are correct as of publication. Due to circumstances difficult to predict or anticipate and even frequently beyond the control of the list owners and managers, list addresses may change. It is possible to keep apprised of the current list of FL discussion lists by accessing Bedell's "Review of BITNET/INTERNET Lists for Language Learning" located on the FLTEACH gopher (gopher.cortland.edu 71).